Rolapp Mine
Mouth of Bear Canyon
Price Canyon
Helper vicinity
Carbon County
Utah

HAER No. UT-53

HAER
UTAH,
4-HELP.V,
2-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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4-HELP.V,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Rolapp Mine

HAER No. UT-53

Location:	In Price Canyon, at the mouth of Bear Canyon, 4 miles northwest of Helper, Carbon County, Utah (SW/NE/NE/NW Section 35, T12S-R9E) UTM: 12.510060E.4399270n Quad: Standardville, Utah, 7.5'
Date of Construction:	ca. 1913
Present Owner:	Blackhawk Coal Company P. O. Box 629 Helper, Utah 84526
Significance:	The mine is associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history, i.e., early 20th century coal mining in Utah and the western United States. Coal mining was the chief influence in the settlement and development of Carbon County.
Historians:	Robert G. Rosenberg, Historical Consultant A. Dudley Gardner, Principal Investigator Western Wyoming College August 1988

I. HISTORY

The Rolapp Mine, originally called the Cameron Mine, was first developed by Frank N. Cameron in 1913. It was located near the mouth of Bear Canyon, a side canyon of Price Canyon about four miles northwest of Helper, Utah. The mine was strategically located along the right-of-way of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad through Price Canyon. Frank Cameron had already developed the Panther Mine and the town of Heiner located nearby. The Cameron Mine was first mentioned in the State Coal Mine Inspector's Report for the years 1913-1914. That report stated that Cameron was a part owner who had already sold his interests to Ogden capitalists. Nevertheless, the mine still bore his name, as did the Cameron Coal Company which operated it.[1]

The Cameron Coal Company began shipping coal from the Cameron Mine on April 1, 1913. During that year, the mine produced 11,813 tons of coal, with a sixteen man crew. A wooden tipple with shaker screen was built at the railroad tracks in Price Canyon. An electric hoisting machine, fan, and coal cutting machines were also installed. In 1914-1915, the Cameron Coal Company consisted of M. S. Browning, president, E. S. Rolapp, vice president and general manager; and Mariner Browning, secretary.[2]

Two mines were developed by means of two 740-foot track tunnels to reach six-foot-thick beds in the Castlegate and Kenilworth coal groups, Blackhawk Formation, Mesaverde Group of the Upper Cretaceous Period. The mines were at first considered to be gaseous and required "a great deal of care and skill" to keep them in safe condition. The mines were worked under the room and pillar system, where the coal was mined in rooms separated by narrow ribs or pillars that held the roof. The coal was undercut by machine, then drilled and shot down for loading. By the early 1920s, both animals and electric locomotives were used to haul the coal underground. Upon reaching the portal, the coal was conveyed to the wooden tipple located along the Denver & Rio Grande tracks by an endless rope and tramway.[3]

In 1914-1915, the Cameron Nos. 1 and 2 mines, or A and B, as they were also called, produced 72,530 tons of coal with a 77-man crew. In 1915-1916, that figure rose to 10,710 tons with a 110-man work force. The production of the two mines was generally combined in the State Coal Mine Inspector's Reports. In 1919, the mines achieved a total production of 147,136 tons with 106 men, and in the following year produced 191,913 tons of coal with 130 men. In 1921, the production dropped to 164,377 tons with a 145-man crew.[4]

F. H. Rolapp became president and general manager of the Cameron Coal Company by the early 1920s, and the name of the company changed to the

Royal Coal Company. The trade name of the coal became known as "Royal." In 1924-1925, the Royal Mines produced 162,991 tons of coal, and in 1925-1926, the figure dropped to 141,800 tons. In 1928, the Royal Mines produced 148,336 tons of coal. Production dropped, as the nation entered the Great Depression. The Royal Mines produced 127,277 tons of coal from July 1, 1934 to June 30, 1935. The company employed 112 men in July 1934. Production increased to 175,389 tons of coal from July 1, 1936 to June 30, 1937.[5]

Changes in ownership brought about changes in the name of the mine and camp, which were successively known as Cameron, Rolapp, and, finally, Royal. The camp is still shown as Royal on U. S. Geological Survey quadrangles (Standardville 7.5' quad. 1972), although the mine is called the Rolapp Mine. The camp originally consisted of a two-story store, office building, and thirty dwellinge for minere. It ie likely that the Cameron Coal Company used readily available standardized plans rather than professional architects for the residences and constructed them with local labor. However, no detailed information has been found concerning the construction history of rolapp. The number of miners employed at Rolapp never exceeded 175 and averaged closer to 100 men. In 1930, the Royal Coal Company sold out to the Spring Canyon Coal Company. The camp had a population of about 360 at that time. It had a school, hospital, general store, a post office, and a service station. The new highway up Price Canyon actually served as the main street of the camp. The echool wae a large two-etory brick building with a hipped roof. The population of Rolapp, like many of the coal camps in Carbon County, was a rich ethnic blend of Italians, Germane, Austrians, Slavs, Greeks, and Scandinavians. There does not appear to have been a hierarchy of housing along ethnic or economic divisione. Supervisory personnel tended to live in more substantial residences, but management and labor lived side by side. During the prolonged struggle for union recognition in the coal industry, Rolapp was considered the "strongest union camp in the state."[6]

The Rolapp mines closed in the early 1960s, after nearly fifty years of production. Robert "Bud" Wilson, a miner at Standardville, moved to royal and worked in the mine until they closed. He said that a crew of about 40-50 men worked there at that time. Much like Standardville, there was little warning for the miners, when the operation was finally shut down. When given the word, they merely laid down their tools and went home. At this point, the camp had only a small population, since many of the minere commuted from nearby communities. When U. S. Route 6 was improved through Price Canyon, most of the Royal townsite was destroyed. According to Mr. Wilson, his former residence is under the centerline of today's highway. Road improvement also destroyed the tipple and railroad sidings.[7]

Remnants of royal can still be found in Bear Canyon and consist of building foundations on either side of the road lending to the mines.

During the productive life of the Rolapp mines, an estimated 7.1 million to 7.4 million tons of coal were produced with a 44 percent recovery rate. It has been further estimated that over 19,600,000 tons of coal reserves remain in the ground.[8] Should the demand for coal ever make it economically feasible, the Rolapp mines may once again be the focus of intensive mining activity.

II. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROLAPP MINES AND CAMP

In 1985, Desert West Research, Salt Lake City, Utah, conducted a Class III cultural resource survey in the Bear Canyon area, including the Rolapp site. Rolapp (42Cb515) was considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.[9]

The Rolapp Mine and associated townsite are an integral part of the history of the Bear Canyon mining area, the Book Cliffs Coal Field, and the overall history of coal mining in the State of Utah and the western United States. The site, therefore, has local, state, and regional historical significance. The Rolapp Mine operated nearly continuously from 1913 until the early 1960s. At its peak, the Rolapp Mine employed a work force of about 175 miners, and the townsite had a population approaching 400. The Book Cliffs Coal Field, of which the Rolapp Mine was a part, produced approximately 75 percent of Utah's overall coal output into the 1970s.[10] Finally, Rolapp boasted a rich ethnic diversity, making Carbon Council unlike any other county in Utah, a state dominated by the Mormon agricultural tradition. Miners from all points of the globe, including Italian, Austrians, Greeks, Germans, and Scandinavians were able to live and work together despite language and cultural barriers. Many of these miners and their descendents still reside in the communities of Carbon County, adding to the current ethnic mix of this region.

III. FOOTNOTES

[1] State of Utah, Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, 1914, pp. 138-139; Chuck Zehnder, A Guide to Carbon County Coal Camps and Ghost Towns (Helper, Utah: n.p., 1984), p. 10.

[2] Ibid., Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, 1912.

3 C. A. Allen and E. M. Spieker, "Analyses of Utah Coals," U. S. Bureau of Mines Technical Paper No. 345 (Washington: Government printing Office, 1925), pp. 44-45; H. H. Doelling, Central Utah Coal Fields: Sevier, Sanpete, Wasatch Plateau, Book Cliffs and Emery, Monograph Series No. 3 (Salt Lake City: Utah Geological and Mineralogical Survey, 1972), pp. 250, 350; State of Utah, Report of the Industrial Commission, Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, 1924, pp. 28-29.

4 State of Utah, Report of the Industrial Commission, Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, 1915, p. 10; 1916; 1922, pp. 992-923.

5 State of Utah, Report of the Industrial Commission, Report of the State Coal Mine Inspector, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1936, 1938.

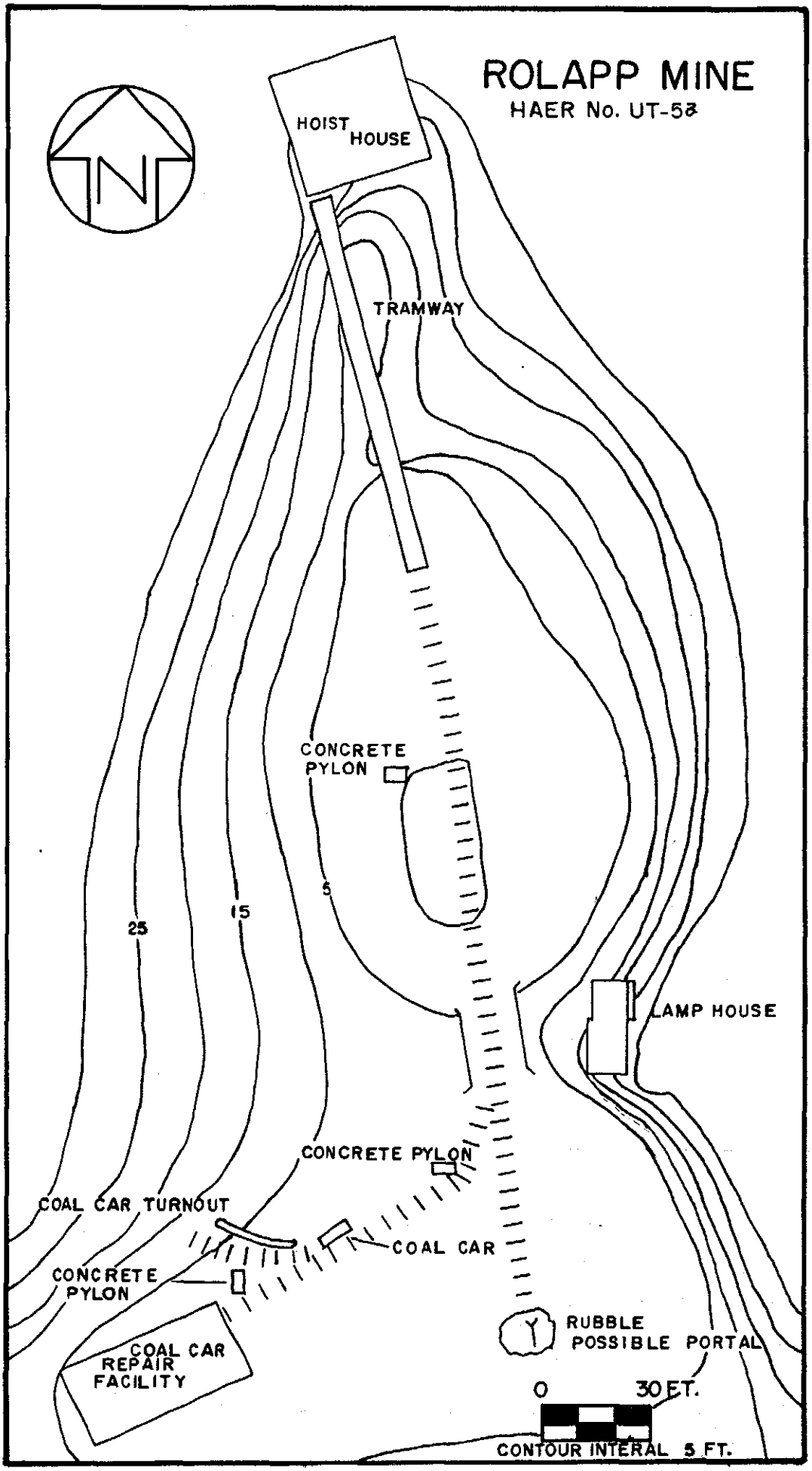
6 Allan Kent Powell, The Next Time We Strike: Labor in Utah's Coal Fields, 1900-1933 (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1985), p. 156; Zehnder, pp. 10-11.

7 Robert "Bud" Wilson, personal communication, Helper, Utah, August 26, 1987.

8 Doelling, pp. 350-351.

9 Michael S. Berry, "An Archeological Evaluation of Historic Coal Mining Sites in Carbon County: Spring Canyon, Bear Canyon, Scofield and Gordon Creek Areas," Desert West Research, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1985 (typewritten).

10 Doelling, p. 250.


ROLAPP MINE
HAER No. UT-53
N
HOIST HOUSE
TRAMWAY
CONCRETE PYLON
5
15
25
LAMP HOUSE
CONCRETE PYLON
COAL CAR TURNOUT
COAL CAR
CONCRETE PYLON
COAL CAR REPAIR FACILITY
RUBBLE POSSIBLE PORTAL
0
30 FT.
CONTOUR INTERAL 5 FT.